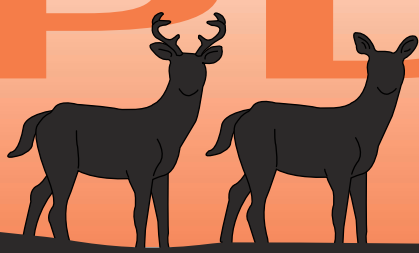


Chronic Wasting Disease UPDATE



from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

The discovery of chronic wasting disease (CWD) in three Wisconsin wild white-tailed deer on February 28, 2002, was an event that will not be easily forgotten by wildlife managers, landowners, hunters, outdoor recreationists, and all others who enjoy or depend on a healthy deer herd in the state.

Finding CWD in Wisconsin marked the first time that the disease was detected east of the Mississippi River, and also the first time that it was detected in a herd as dense as Wisconsin's. Knowing that Wisconsin faced a disease that could spread and have a significant impact on the region's white-tailed deer, the DNR reacted immediately by conferring with other states known to have CWD, reviewing scientific information known on the disease to date, and developing a short-term CWD control strategy.

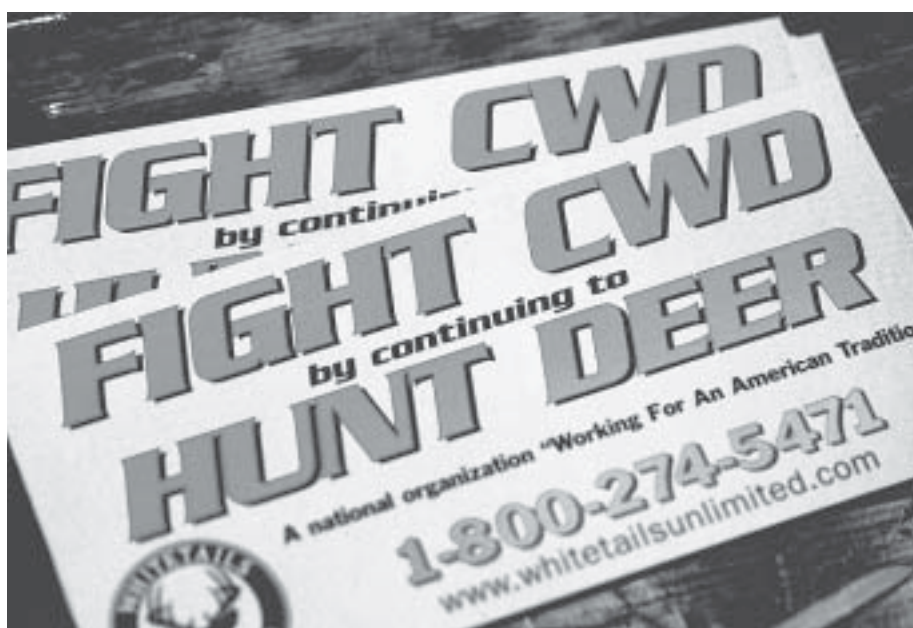
There has been a whirlwind of activity regarding CWD in the last year. This document briefly recaps all CWD control actions taken to date and outlines how these efforts will carry us into the future.

Wisconsin will be dealing with CWD for years to come. The DNR appreciates all of the continued interest and cooperation received during this long-term CWD control effort.

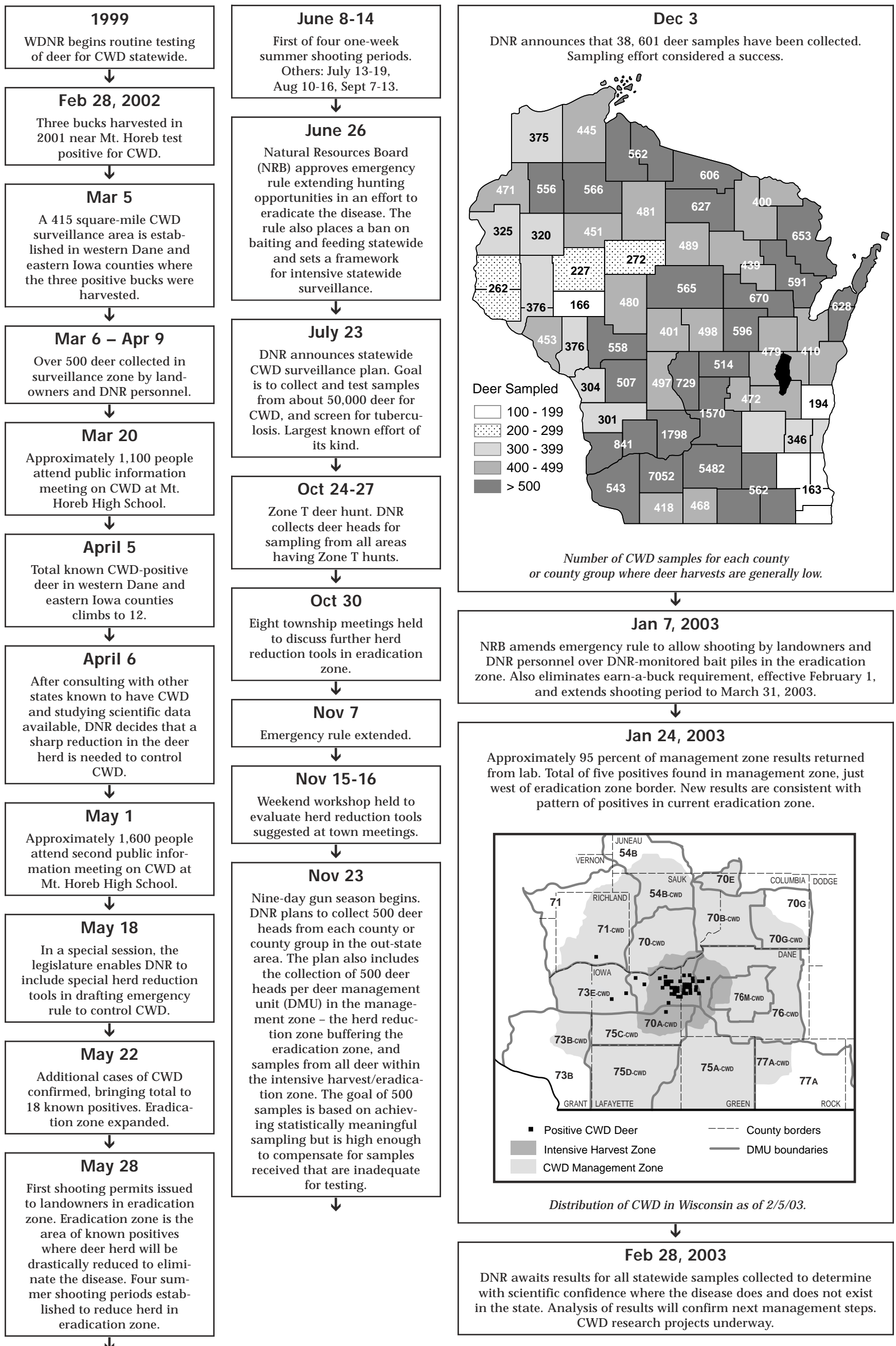
Important information, including the location of kill, age, and sex of deer, was collected from each hunter that volunteered a deer head for CWD sampling. All information was entered into a computer database and assigned a bar code number. The same bar code number was placed on a tag attached to the deer sampled and another copy was given to the hunter who volunteered the deer. The bar code allows for tracking of CWD test results.



Department of Natural Resources staff and volunteers remove heads of deer volunteered for sampling by area hunters at the Black Earth collection station this fall. The DNR set up about 200 collection stations around the state where hunters could bring in deer heads for CWD-sample collection during the early Zone T and traditional nine-day gun deer seasons.



CWD Actions to Date



What's happening now

Listed below are current CWD-related activities being carried out in cooperation with many partners, including the Departments of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, the Department of Health and Family Services, USGS-Wildlife Health Laboratory, and the University of Wisconsin - Madison. Many of the activities will likely shape CWD actions for the remainder of the year and beyond.

Proposed CWD Rule

Public hearings will be held around the state between March 17 and 19 on CWD management rules presented to the Natural Resources Board in January. Locations and times are available from any DNR Service Center. The Natural Resources Board is scheduled to vote on the rule at its April 2003 meeting.

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

The DNR has released an Environmental Impact Statement that assesses the environmental impacts of CWD control actions proposed in the CWD rule (above). Actions assessed include: depopulation of CWD-infected areas, reduction of the deer herd in areas surrounding infected areas, prohibition of baiting and feeding statewide, and tools used to accomplish depopulation and herd reduction. The EIS also includes an analysis of alternative CWD control actions considered.

The EIS will go out to public hearing at the same time as the proposed CWD rule (March 17-19). The dates for public comment on the EIS are February 14 through March 31. The proposed rule, EIS, a summary of public comments and the DNR's response to public comments will all be presented to the Natural Resources Board on April 23. All EIS materials will be available at www.dnr.state.wi.us, under "Chronic Wasting Disease in Wisconsin."

Research

The DNR, University of Wisconsin – Madison, and the United States Geological Survey's National Wildlife Health Laboratory are pursuing the answers to critical CWD questions by performing research that will look into prevalence of disease in Wisconsin, how it's spread, and the effects of deer movement/density on how CWD is spread. Some research efforts will involve aerial surveys and the radio-collaring of deer.

Monitoring of CWD in border states

It is important for the DNR to remain in contact with its border states on CWD control efforts. There are no landscape features that could keep CWD from spreading from one state to another. Illinois has tested and discovered positive CWD cases along its



northeastern border with Wisconsin. Wisconsin continues intensive sampling along the southeastern border of the state to monitor this "at risk" area.

Captive cervid farm investigations

DNR conservation wardens launched an extensive effort to check records of deer farms across the state. More than 100 wardens have been working on the captive deer investigation, completing audits of 630 of the state's 638 deer farms. In addition, DATCP is enforcing an emergency rule on cervid imports and in-state movement, including testing, and is in the process of enacting a permanent rule.

Management of CWD on state lands

State managed lands within CWD eradication and herd management zones will not become deer refuges blocking depopulation efforts. State parks in CWD areas will see hunting seasons similar to surrounding areas. Certain areas within specific parks will be closed to hunting if they are designated use areas (such as campgrounds and picnic areas) or are in urban areas not suitable for hunting.

Investigations relating to CWD and human health

In November, the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services (DHFS) along with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released results from their investigation into a cluster of rare degenerative neurological diseases which occurred in three acquaintances who shared meals of wild game in northwestern Wisconsin. The reports generated considerable public interest due to the concern that these illnesses might somehow be linked to chronic wasting disease (CWD) of deer and elk. The purpose of the investigation was to determine if there was a common source of these diseases and whether there was a connection to eating deer or elk harvested from CWD-affected areas of the United States. Specimens of brain tissue from each of the three men, which had been collected during the individuals' autopsies, were submitted to a national reference laboratory for re-examination, and histories were collected by interviewing other participants at

the feasts. Results indicated that only one of the three patients actually had a prion disease called Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (a naturally-occurring disease of humans) and the other two had different diseases. Because the three patients had different diseases, there could be no common source for these three illnesses. The investigation also found no evidence that any of the game served at the common feasts had been harvested from areas known to have CWD.

Additionally, DHFS has been developing a CJD surveillance plan. Physicians, hospitals, and laboratories may soon be required to report confirmed and suspected cases of CJD to public health officials, and death certificates that list CJD as a cause of death will be further investigated. Information will be gathered about cases identified through these surveillance methods, and if possible, further tests will be conducted to confirm the diagnoses.

Encouraging landowner participation

The success of CWD control actions rely on the cooperation of landowners who have received shooting permits and are allowing deer to be taken from their land. DNR staff met face to face with landowners in the eradication zone and learned that maintaining open lines of communication with landowners and making it as easy as possible for them to receive permits to remove deer from their property are important for fostering a cooperative relationship. The DNR has established these as priority goals. Permits are currently available for the February 1 through March 31 shooting period. Please call the DNR's CWD information line in Dodgeville at (608) 935-1945 for more information.

Publications

The Department of Natural Resources hopes to have a long-term CWD management plan fully developed by mid to late Spring 2003. Additional publications will be released as more is learned to keep you up to date on CWD management. Please visit the DNR Website, www.dnr.state.wi.us. Click on "Chronic Wasting Disease in Wisconsin" for regular updates and additional information on any topic covered in this publication.



There are two things I've come to appreciate after 24 years working as a wildlife biologist and as the director of the DNR's wildlife program. The intensity and emotion that deer management generates is one thing. The other is the willingness of landowners and hunters to get involved in the care and management of Wisconsin's wildlife.

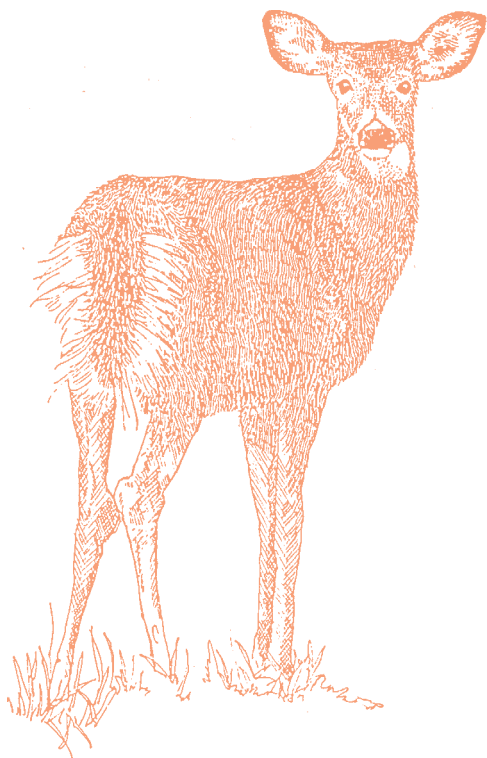
Deer management is always a hot topic in Wisconsin and the emergence of chronic wasting disease in our herd has turned the heat to high. The very first Mt. Horeb area public meeting to share CWD news set a national record for attendance. Over a thousand area landowners volunteered to cooperate in CWD control and began a hunting effort that has lasted nearly a year now. We've come a long way in the last year, but there is still great distance to cover.

Make no mistake, we've prescribed some tough medicine for this problem and the treatment, which will take several years to complete, is far from finished. I know the path won't be easy, but I remain optimistic about the future.

As we finish up our surveillance sample testing from around the state, we'll be sharing more information on future management strategies both in the known infected area and those that don't have any evidence of the disease. We'll also share our plans for long-term monitoring for CWD and other diseases in Wisconsin.

A healthy herd is the goal of each and every one of us. Thanks for your cooperation and I look forward to hearing from many of you in the future.

Tom Hauge
Director, DNR Bureau of Wildlife Management



**For more information
on chronic wasting
disease, please visit
www.dnr.state.wi.us.
Click on "Chronic
Wasting Disease in
Wisconsin."**



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This publication is available in alternate format (large print, Braille, audio tape, etc.) upon request. Please call 608-266-8204 for more information.



GP2/03

What should I do if I observe or harvest a deer that I suspect might have CWD?

Call the local DNR office or the DNR Wildlife Health Team (608-267-6751, 608-221-5375) right away. The DNR will make every effort to collect samples from the possible affected deer for CWD testing.

Wisconsin State Agency Contacts

Department of Natural Resources
Bureau of Wildlife Management

608-266-8204

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Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection; Office
of Outreach and Policy/Animal Health and Safety Issues

608-224-5130

<http://datcp.state.wi.us> keyword: chronic wasting disease

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Department of Health and Family Services

608-267-7321

www.dhfs.state.wi.us/healthtips/BCD/creutzfeldt.htm